Insanity - 1936

Richmond, Va., Times-Dispatch
February 17, 1936

Feeble-minded Negroes

To the Editor of The Times-Dispatch:

Sir,—In the sincere opinion of many well-informed citizens, the percentage of feeble-minded Negroes in Virginia is directly responisble for the percentage of atrocious crimes committed in this State.

For example, the deadly attack on Mr. and Mrs. Kellenger in Buckingham County by Hazel Rose, 15-year-old Negro boy, plainly shows that he is feeble-minded; that he lacks the mentality of a normal 6-year-old child. For proof, read his quoted confession in part:

"I then went outside and Miss Davis threw me 12 cents, and told me to go away. I stopped by the store on the way and got some candy, as I had not had any for a long time and wanted some to eat."

The above is what this young killer said and did immediately after brutally beating to death with a stick two people in cold blood. A 15-year-old boy with that little sense ought not to have been allowed to run at large, any more than an insane boy.

A less heinous case at Suffolk is that of a Negro servant girl who tried to dry a baby's diaper on a hot kitchen stove without removing the garment from the infant. Upon the State of Virginia rests in large measure responsibility for these crimes. Is there any possible justification for this State failing to maintain a colony for epileptic and feeble-minded Negroes, the same as it maintains one for epileptic and feeble-minded whites?

To sentence this half-witted girl to prison, or this fool boy to the electric chair, would be as great an offense against humanity as would be the imprisonment or the electrocution of innocent persons. However deplorable these shocking crimes, yet, in all justice, these youthful criminals should be committed by a commission to the Central State Hospital at Petersburg, until Virginia establishes a colony for feeble-minded Negroes, just like the one for feeble-minded white people.

THEODORE W. JONES.

Richmond.